

## Message Text

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62

ACTION NEA-09

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OTRA, SA, US, EIND, OCON

SUBJECT: SAG ASKS FOR MAXIMUM ADVANCE NOTICE OF HIGH-RANKING OFFICIAL

REF: JIDDA 6221 OF OCTOBER 27, 1974

SUMMARY: EVEN AFTER THIS YEAR'S RECORD PILGRIMAGE A RECORD NUMBER OF VIP'S AND FOREIGN VISITORS CONTINUE TO COME TO JIDDA AND RIYADH. THE AVAILITY OF LOCAL HOTELS, ROYAL PROTOCOL, AND THE FOREIGN MINISTRY TO LODGE AND ASSIST THESE VISITORS IS SEVERELY STRAINED. IN SOME CASES ROOM HAS BEEN MADE FOR HIGH-RANKING DELEGATIONS ONLY BY THE EXPULSION FROM HOTELS OF OTHER AMERICANS; IN OTHER INSTANCES NO ROOM WHATEVER COULD BE FOUND. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS INFORMED EMBASSY THAT PRESSURE FROM VISITORS WILL REMAIN HIGH WITH OFFICIAL VIP'S EXPECTED TO ARRIVE EVERY DAY THROUGHOUT MARCH AND FIRST TWO WEEKS OF APRIL. MFA AND ROYAL DIWAN, THEREFORE, WOULD APPRECIATE AS MUCH ADVANCE NOTICE AS POSSIBLE OF ANY PLANS OF US OFFICIALS TO VISIT SAUDI ARABIA. END SUMMARY.

1. THE HAJJ PILGRIMAGE THIS YEAR BROUGHT A RECORD NUMBER OF VISITORS TO SAUDI ARABIA, AND AS FORESEEN BY REFTTEL, FROM EARLY DECEMBER UNTIL THE END OF JANUARY THE HOTELS OF JIDDA AND RIYADH WERE FULL, AND MANY OFFICES OF THE SAG WERE COMPLETELY OCCUPIED IN PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR VISITORS AND NUMEROUS VIP'S.

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2. THIS YEAR, HOWEVER, WITH THE END OF THE PILGRIMAGE, THE PRESSURE ON HOTEL SPACE AND THE SUPPORT ASSETS OF THE ROYAL DIWAN, AND THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, HAS SCARCELY DIMINISHED. A FEW EXAMPLES WILL SUFFICE: (A) CODEL PRICE, FEBRUARY 12-14: THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT, AND IN PARTICULAR THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND AVIATION, ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE VISIT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE, REPRESENTATIVE MELVIN PRICE, WHO HEADED A DELEGATION OF 20 OTHER CONGRESSMEN AND 30 STAFFERS. THE BEST EFFORTS OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, HOWEVER, COULD UNCOVER NO RPT NO HOTEL ROOMS IN RIYADH EVEN THOUGH THREE WEEKS ADVANCE NOTICE OF THE VISIT HAD BEEN GIVEN. THE MINISTRY HAD FINALLY TO RESORT TO THE EXPEDIENT OF PREEMPTING CONFIRMED RESERVATIONS OF AMERICAN BUSINESS VISITORS TO RIYADH. (B) THE SECRETARY'S VISIT, FEBRUARY 15: IN PREPARATION FOR THE VISIT TO RIYADH BY SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER ON FEBRUARY 15, THE ROYAL DIWAN TOLD THE EMBASSY IT WAS HAPPY TO PROVIDE ALL POSSIBLE SUPPORT AND PRELIMINARY ASSISTANCE, EXCEPT WITH REGARD TO HOTEL ROOMS. DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE ROYAL DIWAN SAID HE COULD BE OF NO HELP WHATSOEVER IN ARRANGING FOR ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THE ADVANCE GROUP OF 25 TO 30 PEOPLE, AND THAT HOTEL MANAGERS HAD TWICE RECENTLY REFUSED EVEN TO ACCEPT A TELEPHONE CALL FROM HIS OFFICE. THE EMBASSY WAS FINALLY ABLE TO OBTAIN ONE RPT ONE HOTEL ROOM AFTER EXTENSIVE PERSONAL CANVASING. MOST OTHER ADVANCE PERSONNEL WERE PUT UP IN QUARTERS BORROWED FROM U.S. PRIVATE COMPANIES. (C) RAILROAD TRADE MISSION: A SEVEN-MAN RAILROAD EQUIPMENT TRADE MISSION SCHEDULED FOR JIDDA MARCH 3-5 HAD TO BE CANCELLED BECAUSE OF THE TOTAL ABSENCE OF HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS. (D) A PROMINENT SAUDI OIL CONSULTANT TOLD THE DCM SOME IMPORTANT VISITORS FROM THE U.S. HAD CALLED ON HIM ONE DAY AFTER SPENDING THE PREVIOUS NIGHT IN A TAXI. HE SAID THEY HAD TAKEN A TAXI FROM THE AIRPORT TO VARIOUS HOTELS, AND AFTER FINDING NO SPACE WHATSOEVER, NEGOTIATED WITH THE TAXI OWNER FOR OVERNIGHT USE OF HIS VEHICLE.

3. THE CHIEF OF PROTOCOL AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AMBASSADOR SALIM SUNBOL, TOLD THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION OF FEBRUARY 25 THAT THE SAG WAS EXPECTING A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HIGH LEVEL FOREIGN DELEGATION TO ARRIVE EVERY DAY FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH, AND FOR THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF APRIL. AMONG THE MARCH VISITORS WERE TO BE THE PRESIDENT OF ITALY, THE GERMAN AND DUTCH FOREIGN MINISTERS, AND THE PRESIDENT OF MALI. AMBASSADOR SUNBOL INFORMED THE AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR THERE COULD BE NO QUESTION OF A VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA BY THE AUSTRALIAN DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER UNTIL THE SECOND HALF OF

APRIL. AMBASSADOR SUNBOL SAID THAT THE MINISTRY AND THE  
ROYAL DIWAN WOULD ALWAYS DO ITS UTMOST TO OBLIGE VISITORS  
FROM THE U.S. ON THEIR BEHALF, HOWEVER, HE ASKED THAT  
THE SAUDI ARABIAN GOVERNMENT BE GIVEN AS  
MUCH ADVANCE NOTICE AS POSSIBLE OF ANY PLANS HIGH  
AMERICAN OFFICIALS MIGHT HAVE TO VISIT SAUDI ARABIA.  
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